



the chain by newromaantic

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Summary: aurora hopper finds herself forced to move in with her father to the small, quiet town of Hawkins, Indiana. What she didn't expect for sure was having to fight a small army of supernatural creatures alongside the boy she hated at first sight.

1. Chapter 1

"No, Jim, I don't know how long, at least until December. Why are you asking all these questions now? I thought custody was all you ever wanted." Mum screeched into the phone.

I knew she wasn't really mad at Dad, she was mad at me. My Aunt Salma had thrown me out of her home — after I'd been living with her for almost a whole year — two days before school started. So, now my mum was scrambling to see who to send me away to.

You're probably wondering, why doesn't your own mother want you to live with her? Well, friends, the answer to that question is both simple and deeply complicated at the same time. My mum didn't want me to live with her because she didn't like being reminded of her old life. Sure, when Dad and her had first gotten divorced she had fought tooth and nail for full custody of me and when she got it immediately moved me far away from my father, but as soon as her first kid with her new husband was born, something shifted in our relationship, she had finally gotten everything she wanted. Again. And I didn't quite fit into the perfect family equation this time.

My mum had given many reasons why to send me away, she was way too busy with her cushy job and now two small children, to look after me (and of course, her practically ignoring my existence made us clash more than a few times), she also claimed she wanted me to improve my Spanish, which was kind of a dumb reason to send your kid away for an indefinite amount of time. But the woman called her sister, Salma, the only one of her sisters who lived in Mexico, and arranged for me to stay with her.

The only reason why I had been reluctant to leave at first was that I actually did like my siblings and definitely wanted to be in their lives, but it wasn't like my mother gave me much of a choice.

After a year, I had become actually quite acclimated with the country, I'd been there before, sure, but it was different actually living there. I quite liked my school (it was far better than the one in London), and I had developed a trusty group of friends. And then came Paulina, and the incident.

Technically, it all started on late May of this year. Pau and I had been pretty good friends since I'd moved to the city, but it took us that long to realise that we liked each other. We went on two dates before the summer and we kissed once. That's it. Then I went away for three months. So you could tell, it wasn't exactly the most serious relationship.

Either way, I did really like Pau, that's why on the very first day I was back in town, before I did anything else, I met with Pau and we just hung out for a few hours, then she walked me home, and since I hadn't seen her in so long I was feeling kind of brave and planted a kiss on her right at the porch of my aunt's house. Little did I know that my aunt had been watching from one of the second storey windows.

Listen, I *did* know my aunt was homophobic, that's why I knew it wasn't a good idea to kiss a girl out in the open where she might see me, but I wasn't thinking straight at the moment. Pun intended. Besides, what's done is done.

Luckily Pau had already left by the time my aunt had made it downstairs, opened the door and started yelling in my face. "*¡Esas cosas son del diablo! ¿Cómo te atreves a cometer tales pecados bajo mi techo? ¡Después de todo lo que he hecho por ti!*" *This is the work of Satan! How dare you commit such sins under my roof? After everything I've done for you!* She'd even thrown in a slap to get her point across.

Although all her yelling was pretty scary, the thing that she had said to me that actually shook me to the core because I had not seen it coming, was what she said to me after her sermon was done. In a quiet icy voice and an even icier gaze that made me feel like I meant absolutely nothing to her, she said, "Don't bother unpacking, you're back to London tomorrow."

And back to London I was. My mother was upset I'd done something to make my aunt throw me out, but I had no idea if she was upset at the action itself. Honestly, it was kind of killing me not to know, but knowing her, we'd probably never talk about it.

"Alright, her flight leaves tomorrow at 4AM and arrives at 4PM Hawkins time. Bye, Jim." Diane slammed down the phone in its base.

It was a done deal then, I guess. I was going to live with my father for the first time in five years.



Twelve hour flights were not pretty, especially when you'd had another twelve hour flight just two days prior. But my mum had surely given me something to think about during it.

As we had pulled up to the airport, I'd gotten off the car without a word, and as we said our goodbyes, my mum went quiet for a few seconds, then she took my hand and said, "I'm not mad."

Then she drove off, because of course, her busy schedule could never allow her to make time for her to actually walk me all the way to the gate.

I knew it shouldn't mean a lot to me. She was a pretty absent parent, and a long time ago I decided that it meant pretty much nothing what she thought of my sexuality. But then as I felt a tear fall down my cheek, I knew that I was kidding no one. I most definitely cared.

I knew Mum hadn't told Dad the whole story about what happened at my Aunt's, and I really was not sure if I'd ever tell him. I mean, I loved my father, but he *had* grown up in a very small town in the Midwest.

"Rory!"

I turned to see my father rushing down the terminal with a big smile on his face. He hugged me so enthusiastically that he picked me right off the ground.

"Hi, Daddy." I said in a choked tone, and he finally let me go.

My father was a very imposing man, even more so when he was wearing his police uniform. I didn't really look a lot like him, I only wished I had inherited some of his tallness.

I held onto my dad's arm as he led me to his truck. The absolute worst part about getting off the twelve hour flight was knowing a two hour car ride awaited me before we got home. Curse you, Hawkins,

for being so small.

Dad and I made small catch up talk for the first few minutes, but I could tell he was stressed out about something, I didn't say anything though.

It wasn't until we had maybe a half hour more to go on the road that Dad sighed deeply, turned to me and said, "Before we get home, I need to talk to you about something."

I frowned. "Okay."

He shifted in his seat. "Uh remember how last year we had some strange disappearances in Hawkins?"

"Yeah, wasn't it the first time you had to do actual policework in Hawkins?"

He ignored my teasing. Rude. "And remember how it all had to do with this government scientific organisation testing out drugs?"

"Yeah." Where the hell was he going with this?

"Well, while we investigated all of this we realised that there were there was this kid who they were experimenting on in their facilities. We managed to rescue her, but they might come looking for her, and her parents are gone." He took a pause.

Wait.

"So, she's been staying with me for the past few months." Dad concluded.

I gave him a look. "So you're telling me that you *adopted a child*? That is so cute, oh my god I'm crying."

He looked at me and frowned. "You're not crying."

"I'm crying internally!"

"What does that even mean?"

I shook my head. "It doesn't matter. The point is, I have a little sister now! Why hadn't you told me?"

"Well, I wouldn't say I've adopted adopted her. She's just staying with me indefinitely and I've been acting as a parental figure. And I didn't tell you because it wasn't a good idea to talk about this on the phone." He explained.

Who was he kidding though?

"Wait a minute, are all three of us going to fit in the trailer?" I didn't mind my father's mobile home, but two people in there was already a little tight.

"No, we've been staying at your grandpa's old cabin in the woods."

Oh. "What's my new sister's name?"

He sighed. "Uhh."

Did he not know? What the fuck? "That's a nice name."

He gave me a parental look. "These scientists kind of took her when she was a baby, and her whole life they only called her Eleven, and she doesn't remember her real name."

"So you just call her Eleven?"

"I usually call her El."

"Oh, that's cute. So, she must be fairly traumatised, by what you've said."

"Yes, she definitely is. She doesn't speak much, so don't crowd her. She can be a little... complicated." He explained.

I nodded and tried to give my dad a comforting smile. "I'll try my best."

2. Chapter 2

So that's how I ended up here, a junior at Hawkins High School. My arrival had garnered some interest within the student community, mostly because they rarely got new students, and when they did, they weren't really as foreign as me.

So during the first week I really just was not left alone, everyone wanted to know what my deal was, why I had a British accent if I was born in Hawkins and my dad was Chief Hooper, which really was not that complicated. But let me tell you, having people constantly requesting you speak to them was unbelievably uncomfortable.

I knew people were interested by me, but I hadn't been able to quite crack if said interest was good or bad. On one hand many people thought it was really cool that I had grown up in New York and London, but on the other hand, a lot of people also seemed to resent me for that very fact.

It wasn't until the second week that I started to find my footing in the school, once the newness of my presence had worn off, I started to be able to tell who genuinely wanted to be friends with me, there wasn't much there though. Just one girl who didn't appear to have that many friends. Her name was Emily Sanders, she had long blonde hair and was the perkier person I had ever met.

For some reason, I'd always been a person who liked to keep busy. So the first thing I'd done when I'd gotten to Hawkins was get a job. At first I'd worked at the cinema, but I'd gotten bored of that quickly and had ended up working at the local arcade, they didn't really need a lot more help, but the owner owed my dad a favour, so he hired me to pretty much just sit around and make sure things ran smoothly. Which meant I just played the games like half of the time. Actually, that's where I was headed now.

I roller skated down the streets of Hawkins, since we only had one car that my dad needed pretty much all the time, and he probably wouldn't let me borrow a car that was technically government property anyway. But I didn't mind roller skating, I'd had some

friends in Mexico who really liked skating, and I'd say I was quite good at it now.

I was running a bit late, so I was zooming through the streets as fast as I could, the arcade a few metres away now, which is why I didn't see the car as it backed out of the spot where it was parked next to the arcade.

A muffled thud was heard as the rear end of the car collided with my side. The driver braked immediately, but I had already fallen to the ground. I'd tried to prevent my fall with my knee but I'd only managed to get the side of my calf scraped pretty badly on the harsh pavement.

"Oh my god, I am so sorry." A man's voice came from above me.

I looked up to meet the face of my attacker.

Oh, it was a boy I was pretty sure I shared a few classes with. He was more of the quiet type and he did look genuinely worried about me.

I sighed. "I'm okay."

He offered his hand and I gladly took it.

"I really didn't see you there and I was kind of distracted, I'm so sorry." He continued in his frantic worried tone. "Oh god, you're bleeding, I should take you to the hospital."

I examined my injury. It was kind of bleeding but it did not look hospital-worthy. "No, it's barely a scratch, and at least I now have an excuse for being late to work." I nodded towards the arcade. "Plus I think it'll be fine with our trusty first aid kit."

"At least let me help you in, and with the first aid." He insisted.

"Okay, sure."



"I'm sorry, I know I know you from school, but I can't seem to remember your name." I said as the sandy haired boy took out the

stuff from the first aid kit.

I was sat down on the counter with him standing right beside me, my injured leg well within his reach.

He looked down. "Uh it's Jonathan, Jonathan Byers."

"Were you just leaving the arcade when you ran me over? We don't get a whole lot of people older than fourteen around here."

He blushed. "I was just dropping off my little brother."

I immediately looked around to see if I could guess which one was Jonathan's brother but there were way too many children. "Ooh, which one is he?"

"Over there, the one with the bowl cut and green sweater. That's Will." Jonathan pointed to him.

"Oh my god he's so cute and tiny I want to pinch his cheeks, and his jumper is practically swallowing him, that is so cute."

Jonathan smiled but stayed focused on the medical supplies for me.

I let out a hiss as Jonathan dabbed my injury with antiseptic. "Wait, Jonathan and Will Byers? You're *those* Jonathan and Will Byers?"

Jonathan looked down bashfully. "Oh I should've guessed you know about that."

"Well yeah, I mean my dad kind of gave me real time updates as everything happened last year."

He finally looked up at me briefly. "Right, your dad is Chief Hooper."

"The one and only."

"He really helped and is still helping my family a lot." He looked so cute when he was all smiley.

"That's nice to hear."

Jonathan put a plaster on my wound. "It's all done."

I hopped down from the counter. "Thanks. You shall receive word via my representatives about pursuing a lawsuit against you, I estimate the amount disputed will be around three thousand dollars for bodily damage and... forty six million in psychological damages."

Jonathan looked genuinely scared.

I let out a laugh. "I'm joking." I elbowed his side lightly. "I don't mind that you hit me with your car, though I will probably tease you about it for the rest of time and forever."

Jonathan smiled like he was only a bit short of a laugh. "Still, I'm really sorry."

"Oh come on, don't sweat it."

I walked him over to the door. Before he left, he turned to look at his brother and then at me. "Would you please keep an eye on him?"

I smiled. "You absolutely got it."



"You're late."

I knew those words awaited me before the door even opened, but I still felt guilt in my chest.

I sighed. "Don't be hard on me, Elf."

I came in and started shedding layers. I honestly did feel bad about leaving El alone longer than necessary, but our first couple of weeks living together hadn't gone exactly without a hitch.

She had, understandably, been wary of me at the beginning. Dad had actually told her some stuff about me, so she wasn't *completely* untrustworthy of me, but she did make it really hard to bond sometimes.

She could barely stand being in the same room as me the first week, and I had to stand a lot of passive aggressive behaviours, but I tried to take everything on with a good face. I think once she realised

Dad's attention or care for her wasn't compromised by my arrival and he wasn't just going to throw her out into the streets once his actual daughter was there she started warming up to me.

I do think a big part of Elf acclimatising to me had to do with me teaching her. Since my dad claimed I remembered more things from eighth grade than he did, and also spent more time home, I should be the one to deal with El's schooling.

So I'd borrowed some books from Hawkins Middle School and tried to teach El, although I would say she was learning far more English and Maths than any other subjects, as those were the only two subjects I was genuinely good at.

"I fell down at work, and my leg kind of hurts so it made it harder to roller skate back here." I explained as I fell next to El on the couch.

I lifted the edge of my bandage a little to show the girl.

She looked at me with genuine concern in her eyes. "Are you okay?"

"Yes, totally fine, kiddo." I reached for a chocolate bar on the coffee table. "Mm by the way, I saw ya boy Mike at the arcade."

I gave El a small teasing shove with my shoulder. She tried but failed to keep in a smile. "How did he look?"

"Mm alright, he was playing with his friends a long time, they were all celebrating one of them broke some kind of record on one of the games." I recounted.

I knew thinking too much about Mike made El sad, but I knew she liked hearing updates about him from time to time.

El smiled forlornly, but she got the sad pout real quick.

"Hey come on, I'll talk to Dad again, maybe you can see him soon." I tried to lift her spirits.

El nodded silently. We both stayed quiet for a moment before El spoke up in her soft quiet voice. "It's not fair."

I slid closer to her on the couch and put my arm around her. "Oh, I know, Elf, I know. Dads can be a little complicated at times but his overprotectiveness comes only out of genuine care, I can assure you that."

"But it doesn't feel like that."

I rubbed Elf's arm. She worried me sometimes. "Everything will be alright, Elf, I promise."



School bells were quite literally the worst sound on Earth.

Biology class with Mr Nettles had dragged on and on, I literally had no recollection of anything that had happened during the lesson. The only thing I remembered was something about an assignment in pairs. I considered myself to be friendly with Jonathan Byers now, so I'd asked him to partner up with me. I should probably ask him what we had to do.

"Hey Jonathan!" I called after the retreating boy.

He stopped, and his shoulders seemed to lose some tension once he saw it was just me. It wasn't until I came near him that I realised he had actually been walking with a girl. A very pretty girl. In fact, she was so pretty I spent way more than the regular amount of time you're supposed to look at someone, staring at her.

"Hey! I don't think we've met, I'm Nancy Wheeler, I've heard a lot about you."

It took a few seconds for me to register that the pretty girl had just spoken to me. "Oh it's so nice to meet you, I'm Rory, as you probably know." I then remembered Jonathan was there too. "I just came over to ask Jonathan here something about our biology class assignment."

I grabbed a pen from my pocket and started fidgeting with it.

"Yeah, sure, what is it?" Jonathan prompted me.

I scratched the back of my neck. "Um I really didn't listen to a word

that came out of Mr Nettles's mouth, so what did we have to do again?"

Jonathan's lips curled up as he held in a snicker.

I frowned. "What?"

He looked down. "Oh it's nothing, I'm sorry."

"No, come on, tell me. Are you making fun of me because I didn't listen to Mr Nettles?"

Jonathan smiled again. "No, it's not that. It's just... the way you say Nettles."

My mouth opened in understanding. "It *is* a rather funny name, innit?"

Nancy smiled, and I swear my heart skipped a beat. "Honestly, can I just say I love your accent."

I smiled. "Thanks." This was the first time I genuinely meant the thanks at someone complimenting my accent.

Jonathan then distracted me from Nancy's very green eyes and explained our biology project briefly. Right as he finished though, a guy with very big brown hair and for some reason wearing sunglasses, approached us and hugged Nancy from behind, and she let out the cutest little yelp, he then whispered something in her ear, to which she giggled.

I glanced at Jonathan, who seemed to be reaching the same levels of uncomfortable as I was.

Nancy then seemed to remember who she was with and gave her (assumed) boyfriend a few taps on the arm so he'd get off her. "Steve, this is Rory Hopper. Rory, this is my boyfriend Steve Harrington."

I could feel my heart drop as I heard the actual word 'boyfriend'.

The so called Steve looked nodded at me before looking me up and down. "Hey, I've heard a lot about you."

His arrogant smile rubbed me the wrong way, but I tried to be polite.
"That's nice."



"Excuse me? The Dig Dug machine is broken."

I looked up from my book to see which imp dared disturb me.

It was Will Byers's friend group. I knew Will and Mike from sight, but I had no idea about the other two.

I took the lollipop I'd been sucking on out of my mouth. "Have you asked Fred to fix it?"

"He's not here," the one with the cap said.

"Ugh." I put my lollipop back in. I slowly got off my ass and set my book aside.

"You're Chief Hopper's daughter, right?" Tiny Will Byers asked.

"I usually go by Rory, Chief Hopper's daughter is a bit of mouthful."

"My name is Will."

Oh my god could he *be* any more cute?

I nodded as the flock of prepubescent kids followed me to the Dig Dug machine. "Yeah, I know your brother, he pointed you out to me last time he was here."

"Jonathan was here?" He seemed a bit miffed at the news.

"Just a little while, he helped me after he hit me with his car." I reassured him.

And all of a sudden, I seemed to become ten times more interesting to the kids.

"My brother hit you with his car?" Will asked, incredulous.

"That's awesome!" Cap Kid exclaimed.

I considered. "It *was* awesome."

We arrived at the broken machine, and I went to check the plug, as I literally had no idea what else could be wrong. I unplugged it and plugged it in again a few times.

"We thought it might be something to do with the central wiring." One of the kids said from behind me, I think it was the tall one.

I turned to the four boys. "Look, you and I know that I know absolutely nothing about these machines, but I assume one of you does, I can't let you touch actually this stuff but I can let you look at it, so one of you get down here and tell me what to do."

Cap Boy immediately volunteered.

I crawled into the space between the machine and the wall. "Good god, this place is filthy. These people really ought to run the Hoover once in a while."

Cap Boy stuck his head next to me to look at the machine. He then started going off with instructions to fix the machine.

"So, if you're Hopper's daughter, why are you British?" One of the boys out of my view asked.

I fumbled with some wires. "Oh that's the million dollar question, innit?" I heard a few giggles. "It's simple, really, my parents got divorced when I was eleven, my mum got full custody, and decided to move us to London, which is where I'd lived up to now."

"But you didn't live in Hawkins before, right?" A different voice asked.

"Nah, we lived in New York."

"That is so cool." Cap Boy said from beside me.

I shrugged. "S alright."

"What's London like?" A voice I believed to be Will's asked.

"Mm, busy, damp."

"Sounds better than here." Which boy was the debbie downer?

"I mean I like it here too, it's quiet, and – things are really close to one another." I said.

The sound of the machine firing up again distracted the boys completely. They all cheered as I slowly lifted myself off the floor and dusted my jeans.

They seemed really excited to play their game. As I stalked away from them, Will turned to me and said, "Thank you so much, Rory!"

The rest of the boys directed their general gratefulness to me too. I sent them a quick salute and left them to it.



As the third week of class came to an end, all I felt was relief. My life in Hawkins was really starting to take discernable shape.

The hallway was empty as I pondered which books to take home at my locker. I was no stranger to being the last one out of school, I never knew why people always seemed so eager to just leave as fast as humanly possible once the bell rang. I liked taking my time.

"Hey, Hopper!"

I turned to see a big head of hair coming my way, holding a piece of paper in his hand. "Yes, um...?"

"Steve." He supplied, only mildly miffed. Right, Nancy's *boyfriend*. "You graded my paper."

So that's what he was holding. I remembered his essay, it had been pretty disastrous. Our English teacher had handed everyone someone else's assignment to grade, and then we'd returned each assignment to its respective writer, and now we had to take them home to consider our classmates' corrections. We'd also somehow also get graded on our grading of the papers, probably do we'd make an effort grading.

I nodded. "I did."

His annoyed look remained. "So why couldn't you just correct a few spelling errors like everyone else? With all these corrections I'm going to have to pretty much rewrite the whole thing."

"Oh that would be a good idea."

He pinched the bridge of his nose. "Look, can you just take some of these out?"

"I guess I *could*, but I really do think you ought to make some serious rewrites before you hand it in if you want a good grade."

He still didn't seem pleased. "I already wrote the assignment, I'm not gonna do it again I don't have the time."

I shrugged my shoulders and turned away from him to look into my locker. "*El flojo trabaja doble*." I whispered under my breath.

"What did you say? What does that mean?" Steve pressed.

I sighed. Why did no one here know their Latin sayings? "The lazy one works double."

He seemed offended. I had a feeling I wasn't seeing the end of this any time soon. "Are you calling me lazy?"

"No, but I'm calling your work lazy. It's obvious you barely put any effort into it."

He huffed in annoyance. "If I did or didn't, it's none of your business. I just need you to take this back."

I slammed my locker door shut all of a sudden. I turned to Steve. "You know what? I'm not discussing this with you. It's my grade too, so I'm not changing anything. If you want I can help you fix your essay tomorrow, but I am *not* changing that revision."

Before he could say anything, I started speed-walking down the hallway.

"Come on, just change it!" He called after me.

"Write better essays!"



AN: Reviews are appreciated!

3. Chapter 3

AN: For the person who asked: yes, this fic is named after the fleetwood mac song.

I sat in the school's main office trying to fill out some sort of student council form.

Apparently if you wanted to join there was a bunch of stuff they wanted to know, like why did you want to join, were you aware of the time sacrifices you'd have to make, all that boring stuff.

I'd asked around about Hawkins High's student government, but most people either did not know such thing existed and the ones who did didn't care much for it. They didn't put a lot into organising events in the school, the only one they actually put any semblance of effort into was prom.

I figured it was about time the kids from Hawkins started living a little.

"Hey, you're Rory Hopper, right?"

I looked up to see a tall brunette girl with kind green eyes.

I put my pen down. "Uh yes, that's me."

"You want to join student council?" She asked.

I nodded.

She smiled. "That's great! It's always good to have some new people around."

"You want to join the council, Hopper?" Over to us walked Carol, a bitchy redheaded girl who I'd clashed with a couple of times in class.

"Oh is this not the form for the Bananarama super fan club? Why did no one tell me?" I said in fake-shock.

Carol scoffed at me, before rolling her eyea. "I'm actually running for president myself."

Oh motherfucker.

I tried to hide how pissed off I actually was. "Oh, isn't that just great?"

The green-eyed girl, whose name I was yet to learn looked between Carol and I worriedly, as if she wasn't sure whether to interject or not. Finally, she said, "I actually have to get going, but good luck, Rory. See you guys later."

And with that she grabbed her books and left. Way to leave me alone with the she devil.

I looked down at my form, hoping Carol would get the message and leave, but no such luck.

"You know, it's going to be some tough competition to get into the junior class council, people aren't so keen on newbies they know nothing about trying to take someone else's spot. If I were you, I'd make sure my speech for election day was absolutely awe-inspiring."

I looked at Carol. "Gee, thanks a lot, Carol."

I started on my form again and she finally left me alone.



Art class was a very soothing moment for me. It was my me time, time to relax, not worry about anything, and just let myself flow within my art. I was not by any means good at it though, I would say maybe I was mildly okay, but it was cathartic.

I also liked it because it was my class with the least amount of annoying individuals. My friend Emily also had the class, and she had the tendency to brighten any room she entered, the rest of my classmates I didn't know very well, but they were all pretty friendly and pretty funny, the only exception to this was one Steve Harrington, whom I'm sure just took the class because he thought it'd be an easy A, which annoyed our teacher very much. I tried my best

to ignore his existence.

This week our theme was 'home'. We had to paint something that reminded us of our home, or what we thought of as home. Which was complicated for me. I thought of myself as being American, English and Puerto Rican, so settling on one thing or one place was almost impossible but in the end I tried to make it work.

Now, I won't lie and say my painting should be in the MoMA, but I was pretty proud of it. It was one third of the Puerto Rican, American and British flags all together forming one, a string holding the three pieces together. Above it I'd written the phrase '*ni de aquí ni de allá*'. I'd put a lot of effort into it, and I was very pleased with the results.

"Can I see it now?" Emily asked impatiently from beside me.

We'd said we'd wait until we finished to show each other our pieces. She thought it made it more exciting.

"Sure."

Without much preamble, I turned my painting so Emily could see it.

Her eyebrows raised. "Oh my gosh, Rory, it's so good! Is that supposed to be and America, England and... uh Cuba?."

Her saying Cuba made my blood boil, I knew the flags were similar, but surely it can't be that hard to tell them apart. I tried to remain calm. "Puerto Rico, actually."

She frowned. "You're Puerto Rican?"

I nodded.

"Huh." I could almost hear the gears turning in her head. "But... your dad?"

"He's an American through and through, but my mum was born and raised in Puerto Rico and moved to America when she was eighteen for college and then stayed here." I explained.

Emily nodded slowly. "That's interesting. Maybe it's for the best most

people don't know, if you were any more interesting, people would actually start hating you instead of being oddly interested in your life."

I chuckled. "Or even worse, they could start being *more* weirdly interested in my life."

Emily laughed before adding a few brush strokes to her own canvas.

"Can I see your painting?" I asked.

Emily grimaced. "It's not finished yet."

"Emily! The class is almost over!" I reminded her.

"I know, I know. But I'm going to get here super early next week to finish before Miss Edwards grades it."

"Alright, if you say so."

Emily focused on her painting again, and I sat back in my chair, trying to take a peek at other people's work. I was actually thinking of getting up and go chat to someone when the bell rang, signaling the end of the class, thus the end of the this fine Wednesday at school.

I started putting away my stuff when I noticed a commotion going on right in front of my space. I looked up just in time to see Steve Harrington push into Scott Daleman's shoulder, who happened to be carrying a can of red paint to put away. And, you guessed it, Scott dropped the paint, right onto my precious painting.

It all happened so fast, before I could even react, the red paint was oozing down the bright colours of my painting and all I could think about was how much it looked like blood. And I know I was being a little dramatic but I'd worked very hard on this painting, and in less than a second it was all gone.

I could vaguely hear Scott's voice frantically telling me he was sorry. But my sights set on one big haired fucker, who had briefly stopped to assess the damage he'd done.

"Harrington! What the fuck?" I felt tears forming in my eyes and something pulling at my throat, but I forced them down.

Steve shrugged his shoulders tensely. "I'm sorry, okay? But it wasn't entirely *my* fault."

He did not sound one bit sorry.

My eyes widened. "Oh my god, that is absolute tosh. One of the only rules in this room reads very clearly, be careful. Scott was being careful, but *you*, fucking hillbilly had to come barreling down and shoved Scott like the uncivilised numpty you are."

He seemed confused for a split second before getting his upset face on. "Calm down, it's just a painting."

"A painting which has not been graded yet, not to mention the fact that I spent hours and hours working on it, and it meant a lot to me." I was now standing, frowning deeply at Steve.

"Well then maybe you should've done something simpler."

Was he for real?

I gaped at him. "This is not about that! It's about you ruining my work in a really stupid way that could've been prevented, you absolute fucking arse."

"Will you *please* calm down?" He said exasperated.

"Will you *please* fly into the sun?"

Steve sighed. "Look, I already said I was sorry, I don't see what else I can do, and I need to get going, so – "

He took off.

"Hey! Don't you walk away from me!" I yelled after his retreating back, but he was already out of earshot.

The worst part about this was that he was probably on his way to meet Nancy, and he would be the one who got to kiss her beautiful

face. So even though he was the one who wronged me, he was the one who would get the reward. Life most definitely was not fair.



I flipped through the radio stations in the car, but I could feel Jonathan's eyes on me begging me to just pick one, but he was too polite to actually tell me. I finally settled on a random one, just to give him some peace.

"So, this car looks nice when its rear end is not hitting me." I commented with a slight smirk.

Jonathan ducked his head. "I try."

We were currently headed towards my place, and when I say my place I mean my dad's old trailer, I went there occasionally because we were supposed to still be living there, and because it had a working phone, unlike our cabin.

I'd tried to get Jonathan to offer his place, but apparently Will's gang was going to be there so it'd be real hard to get any work done. And I figured the trailer wouldn't arise any suspicion.

As we arrived I tried to examine the place discreetly for any signs of the fact that no one was currently living there, but I'd been thorough with my check yesterday.

"Settle in, you want a La Croix?" I said to Jonathan as I dumped my stuff in an armchair.

Jonathan sat on the couch. "Sure."

Good, because it was all we had in the fridge. I grabbed our beverages from the fridge as Jonathan looked around the tiny space. There were a few pictures on the walls, but the rest of it was pretty bare. I just hoped he didn't ask to see my room, because it did not exist.

I took out my books as Jonathan popped open his drink. He took a sip and coughed, almost spitting it out.

"Yeah, it takes a while to adjust to the terrible flavour." I commented.

Jonathan carefully set his drink back on the coffee table, as far away from himself as he could.

I stared at my biology textbook blankly. "Do you have any idea how much I don't want to do this?"

"It can't be that hard." He tried to encourage.

I sat back on the couch. "Even thinking about having to do it makes my brain hurt."

"Alright, so biology."

I perked up. "Oh that reminds me, do you know the name of the middle school science teacher?"

Jonathan frowned. "It's Mr Clarke, I think."

I wrote it down on the margin of my bio book. "Great, thanks."

"Sure. What do you need him for?"

I need him to teach me middle school science so I can teach my recluse little sister. "Just to ask him a question."

"Alright. Let's get started then. How do you think we should divide our research?"

"Uh I guess – "

The phone's loud ringing cut me off. I stood up to answer. "I'm sorry, I think this is a very important call."

I'd given my friends this number and the arcade's number in case they caught me at either place, but it was proving difficult so far.

I picked up the phone. "Hello?"

"Aurora?" So it was her.

I almost jumped in excitement. "*Pau? No chingues, te extraño un buen,*

necesito contarte un chorro de cosas." Pau, I miss you so much, there's so many things I've got to tell you.

"Ya se! Yo también, me haces un buen de falta." I know, I miss you too
Pau moaned back from the other end.

"Oye pero habíamos quedado en enviarnos cartas, las llamadas cuestan un buen." Hey, we'd said we'd send letters to each other though, calls cost a ton.

I could almost hear her pout through the phone. *"Ya séee, pero quería escuchar tu voz." I knooow, but I wanted to hear your voice.*

"Ay que bonita, pero ya apúrate a ver, qué ha pasado allá en estos días de escuela?" Aw, that's so sweet, but come on hurry up, what's been going on at school over there? I tried to rush her.

Pau then launched into a monologue about all the drama that had gone down at our tiny school back in Puerto Rico, half of it was kind of interesting, but the other half was more or less useless information. By the very end of it, Pau finally asked how things were on my end.

"Eeh, pues ha estado todo tranquilo, todo mundo estuvo pegado de mi en la escuela la primera semana, pero ahora ya nada más me estoy juntando con como dos personas. Pero sabes qué? Ahorita estoy haciendo un proyecto con un amigo, y ya me tengo que ir." Um, well everything's been calm over here, everyone was all over me during the first week of school, but I've only been hanging out with like two people now. But you know what? I'm doing a project with a friend right now, and I have to go. I explained to my friend.

She was sad to hang up, but I knew that phone call would probably cost her an arm and a leg. So we said our goodbyes.

I turned back to Jonathan, to see him looking at me with a bit of a frown.

"I'm sorry, I just hadn't talked to my friend in a while, I got a little excited." I explained to him.

He nodded. *"That's okay." He looked down at his book briefly. "Was that – was that Spanish?"*

I nodded as I took a sip of my La Croix. "You could tell, huh?"

"I didn't know you spoke Spanish."

"Yeah, my mum's Puerto Rican."

Jonathan seemed surprised. "Oh."

"I actually tried to take Spanish in school, I attended three classes before my dad realised what I was doing and went to the school to tell them I already knew Spanish."

Jonathan smiled lightly. "Did you get in trouble?"

I scribbled on my notebook. "Not really, they just made me drop the class."

"I'm actually very bad at Spanish, I'm pretty sure I'm failing the class." He commented.

"I can help you if you want." I offered.

"Thanks. But maybe we should focus on biology first." Jonathan nodded towards our open books.

I sighed before accepting defeat and finally starting on our assignment.



"What are you doing?"

I looked up at Emily startled. I'd been trying to work on my speech all of lunch. I'd already practiced saying it to my dad and El yesterday but I still felt like I needed to make a few changes.

I looked back down at my notebook. "I'm just working on my speech."

Emily frowned. "Speech? Is it for class? I hope it's for one we don't share because I don't remember anything about a speech."

"No, it's for the student council, voting is today." I reminded her.

Her frown deepened. "But... you're not running for president, are you?"

"What? No, I'm just running for being a member."

Emily remained confused. "Then why are you making a speech?"

I finally put my pencil down, what was Emily even talking — "Do we not have to make a speech?"

"The very few candidates for the council are usually announced on the loudspeakers, and then we write or picks on a piece of paper. Then the president candidates are announced, and they do make a speech, but not until later." Emily explained.

I stared down at my notebook with hatred. "God-fucking-damit." I tore the page with my speech on it. "That fucking bitch Carol fucking lied to me, and I fell for it."

Emily gave me a sympathetic smile. "Well, look at the bright side, you found out before the voting happened."

I sighed. "I just do not understand the need to make me think I had to deliver a speech. She's so — "

I cut myself off and huffed lowly. I looked at the speech I'd been putting so much effort into, all because of fucking Carol's agenda.

I took a deep breath. "You know what? I don't care. I've worked hard on that speech, and these bitches are going to hear it one way or another."

I smiled cheekily at my friend, who gave me a curious look.

It was game time.



I stood right outside the principal's office, a radio that belonged to Emily's father in my hand.

"Alright he's just finishing up the names, it's go time." Em's grainy

voice came through the speaker.

"Copy that." I responded as I made a beeline towards the office door.

I burst into the room, much to the principal's surprise. He was a short skinny bald man with glasses who was always trying to socialise with the students, surely he wouldn't be too mad at me.

I mouthed an apology as I grabbed a hold of the mic.

Principal Pelton recovered from his shock. "What do you think you're doing?" He whisper-yelled. "Give me that." He unsuccessfully tried to take the apparatus from me.

I quickly clicked the button to start the transmission. *"Hello students of Hawkins High. This is your candidate for junior council, Rory Hopper, and today I would like to address the junior class of this institution with a very important message."* As I spoke I tried to give the principal a look that said please just let me finish. *"I know at this point you don't care much about student council. I mean, what's the point anyway, what do they do? They organise the prom, it turns out okay, and that's it, right? But what you don't know, my dear Hawkins students, is that it can be so much more than that. I am not only trying to get your hopes up by saying this. We all have to be here every weekday for the next two years, I promise I will do everything in my power to make those approximately 390 days left better, be it by a bake sale, or an art showing, or a party, or an outing or anything else you might want to make it special. That is my promise to you, making the day-to-day of Hawkins High better, maybe not by outlandish activities but by the little things that will brighten your day. This school has been nothing but welcoming to me, I hope I will make it justice. My name is Rory Hopper, and I am running for junior student council. Thank very much."*

Pelton had calmed down and had an almost touched look on his face by the time I finished but I did not stick around to see if the face was true to his feelings, I bolted out of the room as fast as I'd come in.

Take that, Carol.